

BOOK REVIEWS : BOEKBESPREKINGS

BLOOD TRANSFUSION TECHNIQUES

A Laboratory Handbook of Blood Transfusion Techniques. By A. D. Farr, F.I.M.L.T., A.I.S.T. Pp. xi + 135. Illustrated. R1.75 net. London: William Heinemann Medical Books Limited, 1961.

This handbook is intended primarily for the blood transfusion technologist and was written to 'fill a gap in the literature covering the general practice of blood transfusion as it affects the laboratory'. It therefore details various non-serological techniques. The chapters are arranged under the following headings: general apparatus, crystalloid solutions, whole blood, blood products, blood-volume expanders, and transfusion apparatus.

When reading this book one is struck by the vast differences that exist between the established blood transfusion services in South Africa and those in England. This is particularly so when considering the apparatus used, such as donor collection sets, blood bottles and giving sets. In South Africa, with few exceptions, the disposable type of apparatus is used, whereas in England it is still of the re-usable type. Consequently, the author has devoted almost half the book to descriptions of the preparation of anticoagulant solutions, the cleaning, preparation and assembly of blood bottles, giving sets and donor collection sets. From our point of view, therefore, the merit of this book is largely lost. Because of these and several other equally radical differences, it is not possible to recommend this book to the uncritical reader engaged in transfusion technology in South Africa. B.C.E.

LIGHT COAGULATION OF THE RETINA

Light Coagulation. By Gerd Meyer-Schwickerath, M.D. and translated by S. M. Drance, M.B., F.R.C.S. (Eng.). Pp. 114. 55 illustrations. South African selling price: R8.10. South African agents: P. B. Mayer, Box 713, Cape Town and Westdene Products (Pty.) Ltd., Medical Book Dept., P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg. St. Louis: C. V. Mosby, 1960.

It is to Professor Gerd Meyer-Schwickerath that credit is due for the practical application of light coagulation of the retina to clinical practice.

This translation of his monograph has brought the work into English medical literature. It gives a résumé of the history and development of this method of treatment, culminating in the use of the xenon arc lamp, which is at present used in the commercial model.

The method by which the light-coagulator is used is described in full, followed by a brief description of the histological changes which occur after treatment.

The main groups of retinal holes and tears and retinal and choroidal tumours which are amenable to treatment are described and illustrated, both before and after treatment.

The description of those retinal degenerations likely to lead to detachment, and their prophylactic treatment by this method, is of immense importance.

Finally, a short chapter on the treatment of certain iris lesions and surface tumours at the limbus, completes an authoritative introduction to this rapidly growing subject.

The translation is well presented in a concise style which makes pleasant reading, although there are too many spelling errors. One hopes this will be rectified in subsequent editions.

Ophthalmologists the world over will want to read this monograph, but its appeal should extend also to all practitioners who are interested in retinal surgery. M.L.

MODERN HUMAN GENETICS

Recent Advances in Human Genetics. Ed. by L. S. Penrose, M.A., M.D., F.R.S. Pp. vii + 194. 13 Illustrations. R2.75 net. London: J. & A. Churchill Ltd. 1961.

This latest addition to the 'recent advances' series is a very welcome one. Human genetics has been medical 'news' of recent years, mainly because of the development of 'nuclear sexing' followed by actual chromosome counting. Abnormal haemoglobins have also been subjects of considerable labour,

while newer statistical methods have been applied to such considerations as mutation rates. Chromosome mapping is still in its infancy—a rather protracted infancy in the case of the human. These and other subjects are discussed in this most interesting volume, which will be useful to workers in the field by reason of discussions of methods and a good list of references, and will be illuminating to all medical men who wish to go a little way behind diseases and symptoms and signs. W.P.U.J.

BASIC FACETS OF HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia and the Effects of Cold. British Medical Bulletin. Vol. 17, No. 1, January 1961. Pp. 78. Illustrated. R2.00. London: The British Council, Medical Department, 1961.

This is a remarkably interesting and authoritative collection of articles dealing with some of the basic and controversial facets of hypothermia. The subjects covered by contributors, mostly British and Canadian, range widely and, since each article has been written by a specialist, the enormous and fascinating field of hypothermia is laid before the reader in a scientific and thought-provoking manner. Considering space limitations, it is surprising to see how detailed the reports are, and there is an extensive bibliography at the end of each to enable the reader to continue exploring a particular aspect of the vast literature available.

The achievements in this field have been considerable and have come about only recently—many of the techniques and facts presented would not have been believed possible in 1955—but the most dramatic development is that man can tolerate and recover from a body temperature of as low as 10°C.

The importance of a publication such as this one is to present the current status of research to the uninitiated. It is important also because the more original and detailed literature published, the more quickly will the various difficulties and problems be solved with the interchange of information. C.N.B.

ANAESTHETIC ACCIDENTS

Anaesthetic Accidents. By V. Keating, M.B., B.Ch., D.A., F.F.A.R.C.S. Pp. vii + 288. Illustrated. R2.80 net. London: Lloyd-Luke Medical Books Ltd. 1961.

The second edition of Dr. Keating's very readable and informative book on 'Anaesthetic accidents' is a justification of the writer's aim, which is an attempt to review the causes and to indicate the possible prevention and treatment of these distressing incidents.

All aspects of anaesthesia are subjected to scrutiny, and with our increasing knowledge of the pharmacology of the relaxant drugs, the review of the side-actions of relaxants is of particular importance.

An excellent chapter on general anaesthesia and respiratory function—in which the disturbances arising as a result of hypoxia and hypercapnia are discussed—merits the careful attention of all practising anaesthetists.

Emphasis is laid on the importance of the recovery ward in reducing the mortality and morbidity following anaesthesia, and in a short, but very important, chapter on 'Medico-legal considerations', Dr. Keating makes the following significant statement with reference to the death of a patient under an anaesthetic: 'What is required is that the anaesthetist shall exercise due care, having regard to his experience and standing as a specialist'.

The book is well printed, and is brimful of sound judicious advice on numerous problems with which the anaesthetist is confronted from time to time. J.A.

NEUROLOGY

Essentials of Neurology. By John N. Walton, M.D., M.R.C.P. Pp. xvii + 422. R3.00. London: Pitman Medical Publishing Co. 1961.

The medical student of today certainly has a wide choice of text-books in neurology to assist him in acquiring the basic

knowledge which he needs in this field, and to recommend any single one above all others, is a difficult task. A great deal will depend on the individual student, on his type of mind, whether he wants many detailed facts presented to him and which he is prepared to learn off by sheer exercise of memory, or whether he has a tidier, more logical, approach and is prepared to acquire his knowledge from basic information and general principles to which is added the ceaseless acquisition of clinical experience by zealously visiting the wards and repeatedly examining the clinical material available.

This book is by one of the younger neurologists and it is planned in sections, starting with a consideration of cardinal symptoms and signs and including information about the various investigations that are available. The next section is concerned with brief descriptions of specific syndromes and the volume ends with a small section of 40 pages giving an outline of treatment in neurology. The student who decides to rely on this text will not go wrong, and if he uses the references at the end of each chapter he will become quite knowledgeable in neurology. S.B.

ENDOCRINOLOGY

Progress in Endocrinology. Part I. Neuroendocrinology and endocrinology of the thyroid and parathyroid glands. Ed. by K. Fotherby, J. A. Loraine, J. A. Strong and P. Eckstein. Pp. x + 166. Illustrated. R4.50 net. London: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

Progress in Endocrinology. Part II. Biochemistry and biological actions of steroids and other hormones. Ed. by K. Fotherby, J. A. Loraine, J. A. Strong and P. Eckstein. Pp. xi + 167. Illustrated. R4.50 net. London: Cambridge University Press, 1961.

These two volumes are reports of the proceedings of a meeting on endocrinology held at Edinburgh in August 1959.

Part I contains several papers which stress the importance of the hypothalamus and attempt to establish its function more positively. The section on the thyroid gland contains good papers on TSH assay, the treatment of hyperthyroidism, and auto-immunity. A short paper on clinical aspects of hyperparathyroidism is followed by several papers which probe parathyroid function without shedding much new light. The diagnosis of parathyroid dysfunction does not seem to have been facilitated recently.

Part II deals largely with techniques of assay and studies of action of various steroids. G. F. Marrian contributes a concise review of recent advances in oestrogen biochemistry, and Patricia Jacobs of chromosome studies in human intersex. A symposium on the relationship of the endocrine glands to cancer includes papers on hypophysectomy, ovariectomy, adrenalectomy and the use of corticoids, as well as several of a more experimental nature. The conclusions are generally not helpful.

It is difficult to recommend these volumes widely. Certainly they should be stocked in the medical library, but I doubt whether most doctors would find nine rand worth of information in the pair. R.H.

ORTHOPAEDICS

Orthopaedics. By George Perkins, M.C., M.Ch., F.R.C.S. Pp. xiii + 975. 577 illustrations. R12.60 net. London: University of London, the Athlone Press, 1961.

The author is one of the last of that coterie of British orthopaedic surgeons who laid the sound foundations of British orthopaedic practice. The book abounds with the restatement of many well-known principles, some of which had been forgotten or even misquoted in contemporary writings—'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose' (Les Guêpes).

To choose any chapter for specific comment is to be unrealistic, because each one contains so much that is valuable. However, Chapter VI, and in particular Section 40, 'Injuries of the knee joint', will adequately reward the reader, and it may obviate the excision of many undamaged menisci.

Here and there ideas are expressed, as for example on p. 508 where screwing or wiring a patella is advised, which few would accept. These few divergences do not detract from the immense value of the book.

The author's humble reason for writing this book—'I cannot believe that an orthopaedic surgeon at the end of his active career has not acquired some knowledge worthy of being handed on', is more than adequately fulfilled. It will be of great value to those studying for examinations, both undergraduate and postgraduate, and even to those who are already practising the speciality. It forms a worthy companion to 'Fractures and dislocations', previously published by the same author. A.S.